DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 794 CG 023 098

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TITLE Communication and Negotiation. Growing Pains: Sex Education for Parents. A Newsletter Series. Letter IV.
INSTITUTION Connecticut Univ., Storrs. Cooperative Extension Service.
REPORT NO 88-6
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 19p.; For related documents, see CG 023 095-099.
AVAILABLE FROM Agricultural Publications, 1376 Storrs Road, The University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06269-4035 ($4.00 for set of 5; quantity discounts).
PUB TYPE Guides - General (050)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Interpersonal Communication; *Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Education; Parent Role; Self Esteem; *Sex Education; *Sexuality

ABSTRACT

This document presents the fourth of five newsletters on sex education for parents. The newsletters were designed to help parents increase their ability to communicate with their adolescents about sexual issues. They explore the origins of the parents' feelings about sex; teach the importance of a healthy self-concept and how to build it in the adolescent; unravel the physical, social, and emotional mysteries of adolescence; and develop some skills that will help parents talk about sex with their adolescents. The specific goals of this newsletter on communication and negotiation are to help parents: (1) be able to identify changes taking place in the adolescents and the parents that can lead to parent/adolescent conflict; (2) be able to explain the difference between Language of Unacceptance and the Language of Acceptance; (3) be able to identify six roadblocks to positive communication and ways to remove them; (4) list the steps in listening; (5) successfully use effective listening at least once a day; (6) be able to list the five steps in negotiation; (7) successfully use the five steps of negotiation at least once with their adolescents; and (8) be able to set limits with their adolescents cooperatively and specifically. The newsletter is presented in workbook format with spaces provided for parents to write answers to questions and exercises. It concludes with a reference list and a short list of suggested readings for parents. (NB)

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ED 327 704

Growing Pains

SEX EDUCATION FOR PARENTS

A Newsletter Series

by

The University of Connecticut
Cooperative Extension Service

Letter I Sexuality
Letter II Self-Esteem
Letter III Puberty/Adolescence
Letter IV COMMUNICATION AND NEGOTIATION
Letter V Talking About Sex

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Letter IV
Communication & Negotiation

At the end of this letter you should:

- **be able to identify changes taking place in your adolescents and you that can lead to parent/adolescent conflict.**
- **be able to explain the difference between Language of Unacceptance and the Language of Acceptance.**
- **be able to identify six roadblocks to positive communication and ways to remove them.**
- **list the steps in Listening.**
- **successfully use effective listening at least once a day.**
- **be able to list the five steps in negotiation.**
- **successfully use the five steps of negotiation at least once with your adolescents.**
- **be able to set limits with your adolescents cooperatively and specifically.**

COMMUNICATION AND CHANGES

Adolescents

You may realize that communicating with your adolescents is different than when they were children. When did it happen? One day they did what they were told and the next day they had twenty reasons why they wouldn't. Adolescents want explanations for parental decisions and many times this ends up in an argument. And to make matters worse — some of their reasons make sense!

Initial work on this project was conducted by Joan Polulech, M.S.W., in 1983 as part of a Pregnancy Prevention Program which was Funded by the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Programs, DHHS.

What's happening here? Your adolescents are growing up. (See Letter III for a review of adolescence). The emotional, physical, intellectual, and social changes of adolescence have begun. This growth opens up new opportunities to talk and reason with your adolescent. Adolescents learn how to reason through "loving" arguments, arguments that do not attack the adolescents as a person. This can also happen through discussions which provide both the adolescent and the parent with real opportunities to explain their values and decision making process. The parents' willingness to participate in adult to adult discussions or even "loving" arguments tells their adolescents that they are aware that their children are growing up.

What are some of the changes taking place in your adolescent that might cause parent/adolescent conflict? Write them in the spaces below.

_____

_____

_____

Parents

Ironically, the 9 to 14 year olds and their mid-life parents seem to be developing in opposite directions. Understanding these differences will help you and your adolescents cope more effectively. Consider the following facts:

Just as the adolescent enters puberty, approaching the peak strength and virility glorified in popular culture, the mid-life parent is beginning to worry about appearance, health, and sexual attractiveness.

Just as the adolescent finds a new way of looking at the world, a view-point that involves a broadening awareness of possibilities and endless hypothetical situations to consider, the mid-life parent undergoes a shift in perspective, a shift toward limits and boundaries, toward the feeling that time is running out.

And, just as adolescents prepare for entrance into adult society and begin to seriously consider issues of work and career, mid-life parents look back on their own lives and perhaps see that they are on an occupation plateau. Whereas society recognizes that the adolescent is just starting out, it labels the mid-life adult as having already had a chance.

On all three counts, adolescents and mid-life parents are moving in opposite directions. If this movement is not understood and accepted, life together can be filled with confusion, misunderstanding, and disagreement. Where the adolescent strives to expand, the parent may push to constrict.

There may be some changes that move you in the same direction as your adolescents. These can help you understand how the adolescent is feeling as well as cause worry and even conflict. If you are a woman you may be expanding by going to work outside of the home. You may find that you and your adolescent have some of the same feelings and concerns. You may also find some new worries.

If you are working when your adolescent is home you may worry about what is happening at home with this "new person."

What are some of the changes taking place in your life that might cause parent/adolescent conflict? Write them in the spaces below.

_____

_____

_____

Much of the power you had over your three-year-olds depended on your size, strength, experience, and control over the things they wanted. But as your children approach adolescence, power based on strength and control does not always work. Many adolescents cannot be forced to obey their parents. Besides you wouldn't want the resentful, resistant, rebellious, and hostile adolescent or adult that forced obedience may bring. With their increased ability to think more abstractly, adolescents often effectively argue rings around parents' rules and expectations.

You can help your adolescents develop self-control and to respect each other through effective communication and decision making. The family system must now make room for an emerging adult.

As a parent you still need to teach, guide, and discipline your adolescent. However, they are starting to think for themselves and want to make their own decisions. Communication is a matter of attitude and skill (see Letter II). You are already working on improving your attitude. In this letter we would like to help you sharpen two of your communication skills. This may make the next few years more enjoyable and beneficial for you and your adolescents. The two skills that can help turn arguments into discussions are: "LISTENING" and "NEGOTIATING." When you first start to use these skills they may feel awkward or seem artificial. You may get discouraged and be tempted to give up before you have given this method of communicating a chance. But try it, you may like it!

WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Postive communication is the glue that holds us together. Without it, we would be like so many dandelion seeds floating in the wind. Communication is the exchange of words, feelings and ideas between people. We may communicate in the "Language of Unacceptance" or in the "Language of Acceptance."

Language of Unacceptance

The **Language of Unacceptance** includes or implies a "solution," a "put-down," or an "I don't care" message. We do this with words and through body language when we point our finger, fold our arms, turn away or screw up our faces. This tells our adolescents that we do not accept them, their behavior or ideas. The adolescent is usually put on the defensive and it makes them feel as if we think they are dumb or that we don't trust them to select a good solution to their problems. It also takes away any chance for your adolescents to do something on their own and to be responsible for solutions to their own problems. Three examples follow:

1. **Adolescent** (very excited):
   "Mr. Jones asked me to mow his lawn. And he's going to pay me $5.00."

1. **Parent** (condescending):
   "I hope you don't embarrass me by doing your usual sloppy job." (put-down message)

2. **Adolescent** (very discouraged):
   "I just can't get all my math problems done on our time tests."

2. **Parent** (helpfully):
   "You just need to study more." (solution)

3. **Adolescent**
   "They put me on the best little league team!"

3. **Parent** (not even taking the time to look up)
   "Oh? Go clean your room." (I don't care message)

These don't sound too bad when you read them. However, take a minute and get your adolescent and have him/her be the parent and you be the adolescent and act out these situations. Really get into them, be very excited about being put on the best little league team, getting the job mowing the lawn, and very discouraged about your math problem. After you role play the situations ask yourself how you felt when your parent (adolescent) gave the different responses. Write these feelings in the spaces below.

_____

_____

_____

Now think of three times in the last two days when you gave your adolescent a "put-down," a "solution," or a "I don't care" message. Write these in the spaces below and discuss them with your adolescent. Find out how she or he felt.

_____

_____

_____

Language of Acceptance

When we use the **Language of Acceptance** we usually "Praise," "Show Appreciation," "Attack the Problem not the Adolescent," "Show Faith in the Adolescents" and "Reflect Back to the Adolescents What They Said And Are Feeling." The Language of Acceptance communicates to your adolescents that they are "OK." It builds positive self-esteem, tells them their feelings are important, and that you want to share those feelings with them. Taking the examples used above, let's respond using the language of acceptance.

1. **Adolescent** (very excited):
   "Mr. Jones asked me to mow his lawn. And he's going to pay me $5.00."

1. **Parent** (very excited):
   "Wow, your first job. You sound excited about it. I know you can do a good job..." (reflecting feelings, showing appreciation and faith in adolescent).

2. **Adolescent** (very discouraged):
   "I just can't get all my math problems done on our time tests."

2. **Parent** (concerned):
   "You really sound discouraged, would you like to talk about it?"... (reflecting feelings and offering to listen and HELP solve the problem).

3. **Adolescent** (excitedly):
   "They put me on the best little league team!"

3. **Parent** (also very excited)
   "That's great! You sound really excited about being on that team. I can't wait to see you play." (reflecting feelings)

Now think of three times when you praised, showed appreciation, attacked a problem instead of your adolescents, and showed faith in your adolescent. Write them on the lines below and talk to your teen about these. Praise yourself.

_____

_____

4 _____

If you use the Language of Unacceptance more than the Language of Acceptance this letter will help you improve your Listening and Negotiating skills so you can praise more than you criticize.

Language of Acceptance leads to:
- Positive self-esteem
- Cooperation
- Caring relationships

Language of Unacceptance leads to:
- Low self-esteem
- Conflict
- Kids who tune out adults and adults who tune out kids and each other.

ROADBLOCKS TO GOOD COMMUNICATION:

Failing to Listen

Continuing to do what you are doing or thinking; listening with your ears only and not "hearing" the feelings behind the words.

Jumping to Conclusions

Not hearing the person out. Deciding after the first few words that you understand and know how the person feels and what he or she needs.

Closing Your Mind

Acting as though you have all the answers. Your ideas and thoughts are best and you are not open to new ideas.

Not Saying What You Really Mean

Saying something vague. Saying something you don't mean because you are not sure how the other person will take it or you don't really know how you feel or what you think.

Being Self Centered

You start to listen but something that is said starts you thinking about yourself and you don't hear what the person has to say.

Judging, Criticizing, Preaching

Judging a person by outward appearances (like a book by its cover) can cause a response that is usually critical and sounds like preaching. This behavior will undoubtedly get a negative response from the other person.

Take a moment to list below some ways you sometimes block good communication with your adolescent.

_____

_____

_____

_____

We all get exasperated at times by others' behavior and attitudes, but irritation often disappears when we understand the person's feelings and we eliminate these roadblocks.

LISTENING

The most effective way to improve understanding and to eliminate the roadblocks to good communication is to LISTEN. Listening will help you use the Language of Acceptance more than the Language of Unacceptance. There are three steps to Effective Listening.

First Step: Stop and Start

Stop what you are doing and **start** facing your adolescents, so they know that you are interested in them and what they are saying.

Stop talking and thinking and **start** paying attention to your adolescents so you can hear what they are saying and determine how they are feeling.

Stop jumping to conclusions and **start** letting your adolescents finish talking and then try to decide what they have said.

List two things that you would like to stop doing and three things you would like to start doing.

Things to stop doing	Things to start doing
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Second Step: Reflective Listening

Many times when you react to what your adolescents have said or done you do not check to see if what you think you heard is what they said. When you use "reflective listening" you tell your adolescents what you heard them say and how they feel.

Many times parents hear only the first few words of what their adolescents say and assume that they know what is to follow. They also do not understand how their adolescents feel, which is revealed in their tone of voice or the physical expressions that accompany the words. Thus they respond to what they think their adolescents are saying. Therefore the first step in "reflective listening" is to identify your adolescents' feelings and what caused those feelings by listening to all the words and feelings.

Then you check to see if what you heard and saw is what they said and how they are feeling. You do this by reflecting back to them what they said and how they are feeling. You do not use the same words as they used but state just the essence of what they said and how they feel. An example follows:

Adolescent: (really down) "I never get invited to the dances."

Parent 1: "It's no wonder the way you dress."

Did this parent hear how the adolescent felt and what caused this feeling? ☐NO ☐ YES

Parent 2: "You sound very disappointed, you really wanted to go the dance Saturday night."

Did this parent hear how the adolescent felt and what caused this feeling? ☐ NO ☐ YES

Parent No. 1 gave a put-down and solution message which will probably turn the adolescent off and it will end the conversation.

Parent No. 2 used a reflective listening response and now the adolescent knows that the parent knows how he or she feels. The adolescent is not put on the defensive and may continue talking.

Adolescent
sends a
message
to you

You reflect it back.

Use Reflective Listening when: Your adolescents: *Express feelings verbally or non-verbally.*
Are sharing ideas important to them.
Feel angry or resistant.

Why use Reflective Listening?

So your adolescents:

Know what you heard
Know that you know how they are feeling
Can get clarification on what they said
Can continue talking without having
their trend of thought interrupted

Many times we try to let our adolescent know that we understand by saying **"I know just how you feel."** Most of the time they say to themselves, "YA! Ya! If only you did." If you reflect back how they are actually feeling they will know that you know. If you reflect back the wrong feeling they will tell you again because you are trying to understand.

Determine what kind of responses the parents are giving in the following examples. Your adolescent comes to you and says:

Example 1.

Adolescent: "Boy am I in trouble and I don't have anyone I can talk to."
Parent No. 1: "You're always in trouble."
Parent No. 2: "Sounds as if you are worried about something and you'd like to talk.
Parent No. 3: "Sounds like you feel that you are in big trouble and don't know what do do."

What kind of responses did the parents give.

Parent No. 1: ☐ Solution ☐ Put-Down ☐ Reflective Listening
Parent No. 2: ☐ Solution ☐ Put-Down ☐ Reflective Listening
Parent No. 3: ☐ Solution ☐ Put-Down ☐ Reflective Listening

If you chose **Put-down** for Parent No. 1 you are correct. If you didn't, go back and read it again and I am sure you will see why it is a put-down. The word "always" puts adolescents and others on the defensive thus making the statement a put-down. And it is jumping to a conclusion.

If you chose **Reflective Listening** for Parent No. 2, you were correct. The adolescent most likely would be worried and did indicate by his/her statement, "I don't have anyone I can talk to," that he/she wanted to talk.

If you chose **put-down** for parent no. 3 you are right. "You don't know what to do" makes it a put-down because you were jumping to a conclusion. Your adolescent did not say or indicate that he/she did not know what to do. Because the person said "feel" you might think the parent was reflecting how the adolescent felt. However, the parent did not reflect back the adolescent's feeling. Part of the content was reflected back "in trouble" but the part "wanting to talk" was missed.

We hope this is starting to make sense. Lets try another example.

EXAMPLE 1.

Your fourteen year old has been asked to the school dance by a very popular senior football player. She comes home all excited.

Adolescent: Guess what Mom! Ralph, the quarterback of our football team, just asked me to go to the school dance Friday night.

Parent No. 1: Over my dead body. You're too young to go out with a senior.

Parent No. 2: Why would a senior want to go out with you, you are only a freshman?

Parent No. 3: It's exciting to be asked to your first high school dance by the most popular football player.

What kind of responses did the parents give?

Parent No. 1: ☐ Solution ☐ Put-Down ☐ Reflective Listening
Parent No. 2: ☐ Solution ☐ Put-Down ☐ Reflective Listening
Parent No. 3: ☐ Solution ☐ Put-Down ☐ Reflective Listening

If you chose **solution** and **put-down** for Parent No. 1 you are correct. If you didn't go back and read it again and I am sure you will see why. Forbidding solution messages stops all communication.

If you chose **put-down** for Parent No. 2 you were correct. Put-downs almost always put the other person on the defensive.

If you chose **reflective listening** for Parent No. 3 you are right. This does not mean that you agree that she can go to the dance with him. All you have said is that you hear how excited she is to have been asked.

Third Step: Feeling-Messages

You have put aside your feelings and thoughts to listen to your adolescents. Now it is your turn to share your thoughts and feelings. You can do this by using "Feeling Messages" rather than an "Attack Message." A "feeling message":

- is a statement of fact about how a specific behavior makes you feel.
- helps you stay in control of your feelings and behavior.
- may be taken as a Put-Down, but because you are not directly attacking your adolescent it is far better for the relationship.

Feeling-Messages get across to your adolescents how you feel and what you want without hurting their self-concept. Attack-Messages place blame and put down adolescents. They are usually Solution, Put-Down, and I Don't Care Messages. If done often and long enough the adolescent will develop an unhealthy self-concept. Below are examples of these two messages.

FEELING MESSAGES	ATTACK MESSAGES
I am disappointed with your math grade and want to ground you.	You are really stupid, anyone can add and subtract.
It hurts me when I am interrupted because I think what I have to say is important.	You are really rude.

Notice there are three parts to a Feeling Message. They are:

1. What happened that bothered you (A non-blameful description of the behavior). Keep it simple and specific.
2. How it makes you feel right now. Tell your **honest** feelings.
3. How this behavior will affect you.

Here is an example of a feeling message.

Your 14 year old boy promised to be home at 4:00 to babysit so you can go to your doctor appointment. Instead he arrives at 5:30.

Description of Behavior: "When you came home at 5:30 instead of 4:00
What it does to You: I missed my appointment with the doctor,
How You Feel: and I am really_____
(how you would feel)

Feeling Messages and Reflecting Feelings are often used together. Following is an example of how this may be done.

Suppose the parent in the example used above did not want her 14 year old daughter to go out with a senior because she was afraid that her daughter might get into a situation that she could not handle. How could the parent say this without making her daughter feel like she didn't trust her and that she is still a baby.

Adolescent: Guess what? Ralph, the quarterback of the football team, just asked me to go to the school dance Friday night.

Parent: You are really excited about being asked to your first high school dance by the most popular football player. (Reflective Listening)

Adolescent: Yes, I am and I can hardly wait to go out with him.

Parent: I know that you really want to go to the dance and you are really excited about it. If you go to the dance with Ralph I would worry from the time you leave until you return. (Feeling Message)

Adolescent: Why would you worry? Don't you trust me? I just knew you wouldn't let me go, you never let me do what I want to do. You still treat me like a baby.

Parent: It really makes you upset and angry when I say something that sounds like I don't trust you. I would be afraid that because you haven't dated very much and Ralph is so much older that you will be put into a situation that you are not ready for. It's not that I don't trust you, I just wonder if you are ready for that experience. (Reflective Listening and Feeling Message)

When you use "feeling message" and "reflective listening" you can listen to each others' points of view, understand how each other feel, keep the issues open for discussion, and open up the possibility to solve the problem in a calm less hostile way. You don't holler and criticize each other as much.

It is very important that you do not follow a feeling message with a put-down or solution message.

You can follow a feeling message or a reflective listening statement with a Reassurance, Limit Setting, Praise, Compliment, or Appreciation statement.

"Sounds like you are worried about something and you would like to talk about it. **I will be glad to talk to you any time.** (Reassurance)

"You sound torn between studying and watching TV tonight. **I am sure you will make the right decision.** (Compliment)

"When you wear that mini-skirt in public I worry that some nut will try to attack you. **I cannot take you to the mall as long as you are wearing that outfit.** (Limit Setting)

WHAT TO DO WHEN LISTENING IS NOT ENOUGH — NEGOTIATE

As your children grow up they start thinking for themselves and their solutions to their problems are not always the same as yours. Many times they want to do things before you think they are ready. And sometimes they are ready for more responsibility than you give them credit for. This can cause problems that never seem to get solved. Listening and talking in the Language of Acceptance often prevents conflict by helping people understand each other's feelings and behavior. **Sometimes this is not enough.** Now we are going to discuss a method of solving problems that cannot be solved with either of these skills. It is called **NEGOTIATION.**

WHAT IS NEGOTIATION?

Negotiation is a way to set limits and find solutions that are acceptable to both parents and teens. It is a way to state clearly everyone's wishes and expectations and resolve the differences through compromise. Compromise allows both you and your adolescent to get as much of what you want as possible.

Negotiation helps parents and adolescents:

develop skills necessary for the adolescent task of separation and establishment of an identity so they can cope in the adult world.

feel a **sense of power,** one of the four elements essential for a positive self concept. (See Letter II)

Through negotiation parents and adolescents learn to take responsibility and how to bring about change instead of being **helpless.**

Negotiable and Non-Negotiable Issues

You may have already decided that some issues such as curfews, vacations, chores, physical safety, strongly held family values, age to start dating, friends at home when parents are not there, homework etc. are non-negotiable. Instead of imposing your will on adolescents, the process of negotiation gives you an opportunity to thoroughly explain and discuss the reasons why these are non-negotiable. Sometimes issues that you think are non-negotiable suddenly become negotiable when more than one solution for solving the problem is generated.

New ways of looking at problems or issues happen when you begin to listen to your adolescent's views on the subjects. If you are clear as to why certain issues are non-negotiable, you are better prepared to justify your stand. If your reasons are valid, they should hold up under negotiation. It will also give you an opportunity to reevaluate your stand on issues, affirm old values, and maybe accept new ones.

Where Do I Stand On Issues?

To help you prepare for the negotiation process with your adolescents, take some time to complete the exercise below. This exercise will help you decide where you stand on certain issues that cause conflict between you and your adolescent.

Issues Exercise

In column 1 below, list three rules or limits that are most likely to cause conflict between you and your adolescents.

In column 2, put whether the rule or limit is negotiable or non-negotiable.

In column 3, give the reasons for your decisions in column 2.

1 Rules or Limits	2 Negotiable Non-Negotiable	3 Reasons For

In filling out column 3 did you consider your adolescent's need for more independence? If you didn't, change the rule to take into account their need for independence. If you did (or after you do) make yourself a poster that says, "I (your name) am a listening parent," and put it on the refrigerator door.

Are your reasons clear and easily explainable? If they aren't, in the space below make them clearer.

Are the limits more for your benefit or your adolescents'? Was the real reason for the rule the one you gave to your adolescent? And was it honest and clear. If not take a "risk" and tell them the real reason. Be ready to negotiate.

It is alright to have rules for your benefit but they must be reasonable and you should give the real reason for the rule. Remember the rule developed by both you and the adolescent is the easiest to enforce.

USING NEGOTIATION TO SOLVE CONFLICT

There are five steps in negotiation. They are: 1) Clarify and state specifically what the real problem is, 2) Brainstorm ways to solve the problem, 3) Together choose one solution, 4) Try the solution, 5) Evaluate how you are doing. Let's look at an example of a common adolescent/parent conflict and how you might resolve this conflict by negotiation.

Step One: Clarify and State Specifically What the Real Problem Is

To do this use:

Feeling Messages to identify and state your feelings. And to make clear how you view the problem.

Reflective Listening to tell your adolescents what you hear them saying the problem is and how they are feeling.

Example: You walk into your adolescent's room and it's a mess again. You are having company and you want it cleaned up so it will look nice.

Feeling Messages:

Parent: "I am embarrassed when people come to our house and see what a mess your room is. They will think I'm a messy housekeeper."

Your adolescent might answer your feeling message something like this. This is when you give a Reflective Listening Response.

Adolescent: (very angry) "All you worry about is what your friends think, you don't care how I feel. My room is not that messy and besides I know where everything is."

Reflective Listening Responses:

Parent: "You're very angry because you think I care more for my friends than I do for you. And you are worried that if your room is cleaned up you will not be able to find anything."

Adolescent: "Yes I am, please don't clean my room again. The last time you cleaned it I couldn't find a thing."

Parent: "We argue and fight over this problem of a clean room and never seem to get anywhere. Let's try a new way of solving problems. It is called negotiation. Would you try it with me and see if we can find a solution that we both can agree on?"

Adolescent: "Yes, if you are really willing to negotiate."

Parent: "All right let's try. The first step in negotiation is to define the problem. Can we agree that the problem is that your room being a mess bothers me, and that we fight over this a lot?"

Adolescent: "Yes, you are bothered by my so-called messy room. However, there is another problem and that is that you are always on my back about it even when we don't have company."

Parent: "OK, I agree that my being 'on your back' is part of the problem. Let's go to the second step of negotiation. It is called brainstorming."

Step Two: Brainstorm.

This is a way of generating as many ways to solve the problem as possible. There are two basic rules:

A. Everyone involved is encouraged to contribute ideas.
B. In this step accept all ideas no matter how far out they sound.

Example:

Adolescent: "All you have to do is close the door to the room when guests are in the house."
Parent: "You can clean your room every week on Saturday Morning."
Adolescent: "Keep the door closed all the time so you do not have to look at the mess."
Adolescent: "You clean my room once every two weeks."
Parent: "If I clean your room I will pick up all the things and put them in a box in the basement."
Adolescent: "You could hire someone to clean the house including my room."
Parent: "You could hire someone to clean the house including my room."
Adolescent: "Let me clean my room once every two weeks when I want to do it."
Parent: "I cannot think of any other solutions, can you?"
Adolescent: "Yes, my last one is: Let Dad do it. Okay that is all. What is the next step."
Parent: "The next step is to choose **one solution** that is *agreeable to both* of us.

Step Three: Together, Choose One Possible Solution.

This solution should be:

A. A Consensus or a Compromise. Both parents and adolescents have to be satisfied with the solution. If you cannot agree on a solution ask yourselves if you are holding out for a perfect solution (the one you want).
B. Specific. Do not use vague general terms, "We will keep the room clean." Be specific, "I (adolescent) will pick up my clothes and etc. and you (parent) will vacuum the rug." Also make sure parents and adolescents understand what each is responsible for.
C. Realistic. Together make sure tasks are achievable, based on what is known about individual family members' abilities, strengths, personalities, resources and potential.
D. Time limited. Be sure to set a realistic period of time to try out the solution.

One way you can start this step is to say, "Let's look at each solution and ask: 'What would happen if we did it this way?' "

Example:

What would happen if: "We hired someone to clean the house."

Consequences:

We would all have more time to do what we wanted to do. You would never learn that there are just some things in life that you have to do yourself.
We would have to do without in some other area, such as food, movies, clothing, etc.
We would have to cut out cable TV, "Oh no, not cable!"

After you choose your agreed upon solution the fourth step is to carry out the solution. (do it).

Step Four: Do It.

Do it, Carry Out the Solution.
Things you need to think about to accomplish this step.

Does everybody know **who** is to do **what** and **when**?

Are you using "Feeling Messages" and "Reflective Listening Responses" when the solution needs to be discussed instead of nagging and giving solution and put-down messages?

Are you showing **TRUST** by allowing the **Natural Consequences,** not one you have designed (a punishment) to reinforce the solution?

Example: Bill is late for school because he cannot find something in his messy room and wants you to write him an excuse. The natural consequence is that he has to take the school's punishment for being late and you do not bail him out. **Warning:** One of the most difficult parts of the Negotiation process is to allow our children to experience the natural results of their behavior. If the consequence is not a life threatening one this is the best way for them to become responsible for their actions.

"If the string is in a knot
Patience will untie it
Patience can do many things.
You will have to try it."

Step Five: Evaluate How Well You Did.

If things are going alright continue on.
If things are not going alright try to figure out why. Do this by answering the following questions.

Did you make clear and certain WHO has to do WHAT and WHEN?

Did you end up as **reminder** or **enforcer** instead of allowing Natural Consequences to do it for you?

Did you send clear and honest feeling messages if you found the solution wasn't being carried out?

Did you use Reflective Listening responses to find out why the solution decided upon wasn't being carried out?

Did you ignore the fact that the solution was not solving the problem?

Do not hestitate to try another solution if this one is not working.
Establishing rules and limits with young adolescents, taking into account their increasing need for autonomy and their continuing need for clear limits, is not an easy task. You have to consider your own needs as well. Some non-negotiable limits are essential. However, if you insist upon certain limits for the sake of "firmness" alone or "because I said so" and do not allow for mutual decision-making in negotiable areas, you may be placing your relationships with your adolescents in jeopardy. **It is important to remember** that your adolescents striving for increased autonomy will cause you to struggle with redefining your parental authority. These struggles are both **necessary** and **positive** steps toward a new parent/child relationship one which will lead to an adult/adult relationship.

Let's Summarize:

Adolescents and their parents share many of the same feelings about growth and change.

Try to keep nonnegotiable rules and issues to a minimum. Let the adolescent help decide which these are.

Communication is verbal and nonverbal.

The three parts of Effective Listening are:
-Stop and Start
-Reflecting Listening
-Feeling-Messages

Parenting styles must change to accommodate the emerging adolescent's need for autonomy.

People need LOVE the most when it appears they deserve it the least.

Brainstorming is a way of generating possible solutions to problems.

Negotiating involves:
-listening
-being flexible yet firm
-humor
-trust and allowing the natural consequences to control the outcome

Replace solution and put-down messages with reflective listening and feeling messages.

Developing positive attitudes and communication skills will help improve your parent-adolescent relationship.

ADD TO YOUR CONTRACT

Choose two roadblocks to good communication that you would like to eliminate and decide how you are going to do it.

1.

2.

Choose one problem in your own family and try to solve it using negotiation.

Problem

SUGGESTED READINGS:

The following information is a resource guide for families wishing to learn more about family relationships and communication.

Between Parent and Child by Haim G. Ginott (Bookstore)

Parent Effectiveness Training by Dr. Thomas Gordon (Extension, Bookstore)

Process of Parenting by Jane Brooks, Palo Alto, CA, Mayfield Publishing Co., 1981

50 Ways to Help you be a Better Parent (Free) write Friend of the Family, Box 40845, Washington, D.C. 20016.

Reference material used in this letter:

"Conference Series on Early Adolescence," Center for Early Adolescence, Department of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina.

Freid, Barbara. **The Midlife Crisis,** Harper and Row Publications, 1976.

Gordon, Thomas. **Parent Effectiveness Training in Action,** N.Y., Peter Wyden, Inc., 1976.

Nuttall, Paul E. **"Improving Communication for Parents of Teens."** The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service.

Nuttall, P.E. and Johnson, S. **"Improving Communication For Parents of Children ages 6-12,"** The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service.

Schenck, Betsy R. PhD. **"Winning Ways to Talk With Children,"** Extension Division, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

ANSWERS TO HOW KNOWLEDGEABLE ARE WE?

F 1. Eggs from one ovary produce male children, and from the other female children.

The child's sex is determined by the male sex chromosome. All of our cells contain 46 Chromosomes. There are 23 pairs. The male and female each contribute one of each pair to the new person. The chromosome that determines what the child will be is called the sex chromosomes. The female has two "X" chromosomes and the Male has one "X" and one "Y" chromosome. If the egg cell of the mother is fertilized by a sperm cell containing an "X" chromosomes the result will be a female child. If the egg cell of the mother is fertilized by a sperm containing a "Y" chromosome, the result will be a male child.

T 2. A woman may ovulate at any time duirng her menstrual cycle.

Ovulation usually happens fourteen days before a woman begins her menstrual flow. However, not all women ovulate on this time table. Some women may ovulate during menstruation.

F 3. Fertilization of the egg (conception) occurs in the vagina when sperm is deposited there through sexual intercourse.

Fertilization, the joining of the sperm cell and the egg cell, usually takes place at the entrance of the fallopian tube. The fertilized ovum is then swept by tiny hairlike projections toward the uterus.

F 4. Douching is one of the adequate and satisfactory methods of contraception.

Douching, washing out of the vagina, no matter with what is not a trustworthy way to prevent pregnancy. It may actually push sperm up into the uterus and fallopian tube.

F 5. Sterilization is a very unpopular method of birth control because it diminishes the person's sexual desires.

100 million couples who practice birth control have chosen sterilization. This is twice as many couples as have chosen the pill. Sterilization does not reduce a person's sexual desires. It may free one from the worry of pregnancy and therefore help couples enjoy sexual intercourse more.

F 6. A person is likely to contact a venereal disease if he or she uses a toilet seat that has been used by an infected person.

People get VD or Sexually Transmitted Disease in a variety of ways. The most common is sexual intercourse. Herpes may be transmitted through open sores as well as oral genital contact. AIDS, as far as we know today, is transmitted by sexual or oral genital contact, blood transfusions from an infected person, and using dirty drug needles that have been used by an infected person. Syphilis and Gonorrhea need a warm moist climate in which to grow such as, vagina or mouth. They are transmitted through sexual intercourse with an infected person. All can be transmitted from the mother to the baby during birth.

F 7. Both men and women can tell if they have V.D.

The early symptoms of Syphilis can be mistaken for other diseases and could go undetected for years. Gonorrhea in the female could also go undetected for years. Most males who have gonorrhea know that something is wrong because of a burning sensation when they urinate. From the time AIDS is detected a person has about 18 months to live. Herpes can be detected but cannot be cured. A person can be a carrier and not know it.

F 8. If you tell teens about sex they will go out and try it.

Statistics show that lack of knowledge is dangerous because of experimentation which may lead to teenage pregnancy.

F 9. Since sex education is required in our schools, most children will eventually have the necessary information.

Only three states require sex education in school and only seven more encourage it. Six states and the District of Columbia encourage the schools to teach their pupils about birth control, while three states discourage such instruction. Twelve states and the District of Columbia require that parents consent to their children's attendance at sex education classes or that parents may withdraw their children from such classes. Connecticut law requires health education in schools but allows each school board to decide if that should include sexuality education. Where sex education is taught it usually consists of biological information.

F 10. Of teens 18 years and under, about 75% of boys have had sexual intercourse and about 25% of girls.

There are 12 million teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 who are sexually active. 7 million boys (that is, 8 in 10 males). 5 million girls (that is, 7 in 10 females).

F 11. The most frequent place for teenage sexual activity is in a parked car.

Most sexual activity takes place in the girl's home. The next most popular place is in the boy's home.

T 12. It is more dangerous for a teenager to get pregnant than a woman in her 20's.

Teenagers are more at risk physically, socially, emotionally, and financially than women in their 20's. The death rate for babies of teenagers is twice that of babies of mothers in their 20's. One half of all aid to families of dependent children goes to families where the mother's first child was born while she was a teenager. Less than half finish school. Half of the pregnancies end in abortion.

T 13. More males masturbate at one time or another during their lives than females.

90% of males and 60% of females masturbate at some time during their lives.

F 14. Puberty is the best time for parents to begin educating their children about sex.

The best time is when your child starts asking questions. That is when they are preschoolers. Sex or sexuality education started when your child was born.

T 15. Wet dreams are a natural occurrence of the male developing body.

This is the signal that boys are capable of producing another human being.

F 16. Puberty occurs for all males and females from the ages of 12 to 14 years of age.

Puberty can begin as early as age 10 for girls and age 12 for boys and as late as 16 to 18 years of age.

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